

# An Experiment with the Bilingual Method for Teaching English as a Complementary Language

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(Accepted for publication: November 16, 1973)

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*Abstract* The purpose of the experiment was to see whether the use of a bilingual technique would result in improvement in English. The method was to measure imitation response of pupils both before and after the use of the technique. The control groups were pupils who followed the usual classroom method in vogue in Sri Lanka (Ceylon) today. Pupils were mainly Grade Nine pupils, categorized into B, A and A + groups on the basis of their parents' income level, occupation and cultural level.

The lesson material was organized into three units, consisting of : (a) Short passages in the mother tongue which provided "cues" for sentence patterns to be taught and served to define and limit the structures to be learned by the pupils ; (b) Comprehension passages correlated with (a) in sentence patterns and structural words only ; (c) Drills for practising the patterns used in (a) and (b).

The initial and final tests sampled formal areas of language, comprehension and free composition, the final test being more difficult because of the test of "recall" rather than "recognition" knowledge. All categories of pupils (B, A and A +) showed a definite improvement, regardless of teacher competence.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Pedagogically an English lesson is analysable into two activities: (a) an attempt to convey meaning, and (b) an attempt to produce imitation.<sup>2</sup> It may be viewed from the angle of the learner as an attempt to *acquire* and *retain* meaning and at the same time to perfect an imitation response. There is no need to haggle over whether the imitation response is to be a spoken imitation or a written imitation. Even if our aim is to obtain written imitation, it is doubtful whether it would be possible without some measure of vocalization.\*<sup>5,8</sup>

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\* ".....internal speech may be carried out wholly by processes within the nervous system, with some unessential discharge upon the final common path for vocal movements" <sup>5</sup>

1.2 There is the view that English is learnt for reading--comprehension only, which some naively take to mean that no kind of imitation response, whether in speech or writing, is necessary. It is being assumed in this paper that even the reading--comprehension aim is not possible of attainment without at least one category of imitation response, namely vocalization. Some form of vocalization is found to be necessary even in the teaching of dead languages and in the use of the grammar translation method as well.\*\*<sup>6</sup> Thus for this paper it is assumed that spoken imitation is necessary to some extent in the learning of an additional language if not as an end itself as a technique of assimilation.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. *The Constituents of Method*

2.1 A method of teaching a language involves four aspects : (a) selection (b) grading (c) presentation (d) repetition.<sup>7</sup>

2.11 No one ever teaches the entire body of knowledge relating to a subject, a **selection** is made of the content. For example, if the course is for tourists, words may have to be selected with a social and commercial bias. Selection will be conditioned not only *by the function* of the language, but also *by the age-level* of the learners ; *by the similarities and dissimilarities* between the mother-tongue and the additional language ; *by the particular variety* of the language that is being taught, there being in the case of English, among other varieties, Canadian, General American, Received English and even Ceylon English [constituting the *dialect*] ; *by the social group* whose language is being taught, for *technical* English and *society* English will be different in themselves [constituting the *register*] ; by whether the language is to be taught primarily for a *reading--comprehension* use, or for a *conversational ability* [medium] ; and by whether the language is that of *an educated class*, a *strictly professional sub-class*, or of *an international class* of academic users of the language [*style*].

2.12 **Grading** will be conditioned by one's conception of the central characteristics of the language, and it will ultimately depend on one's assumptions about language. If one uses a *referential* description of language, one's grading will be in meaning units ; if a *differential* description of language, on sound units, involving identification of phonemes, allophones, monophones, and the variety of sound features and sub-features that have been described by linguists.

2.13 **Presentation** is that aspect of method which concerns this enquiry. It is the only aspect of method which involves *inter-personal relations*. Any

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\*\*Jean Comenius used imitation, repetition and plenty of practice in both reading and speaking.<sup>6</sup>

consideration of this aspect shifts the focus from the study directly into the classroom, into the dynamics of classroom activity. Both *presentation* and the next aspect of method, *repetition*, which is the fourth, focus on class-room activity.

Presentation has two sub-aspects : (a) linguistic and (b) technical.

- (a) The *linguistic aspect* consists of whether presentation should be spoken or written and what proportion of speech and written work should be used ; whether situations and contexts should be used for words, or whether word lists alone would do.
- (b) The *technical aspect* has to do with what aids and devices should be used for meaning-conveying : whether the mother tongue together with or without pictures, actions etc. should be used, or only audio-visual, and action based devices ; whether real or artificial situations, pictures should be used or whether the mother tongue alone should be used. It takes up the question of the degree to which there should be the use of gadgetry, such as audio-visual aids, films, language laboratories, or such home-made contraptions as puppets and flannel boards.

2.14 **Repetition** deals with questions such as how what has been taught may be kept up, and the extent to which in this process, speaking, reading and writing should figure. It is a question of the means for habituating and consolidating what has been presented.

### 3. *The Aim of the Experiment*

3.1 The experiment was to examine the success of a bilingual technique of presentation of an English lesson for meaning-conveying. This was assessed by measuring initially the written imitation response of pupils in English, and after use of the bilingual technique, by measuring imitation response again. It has already been established that successful meaning-conveying would result in successful imitation response.<sup>3</sup>

### 4. *Attendant Difficulties*

4.1 The experiment which was to have been of a year's duration was reduced to a two term period because of political conditions in 1971. A further disadvantage was that the teachers who were diploma students handed over the teaching to the class teacher in the course of the experiment. Yet the duration was sufficient to arrive at some clear conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the technique. There was an additional reason for the inability to work the course as effectively as one would have liked. Teachers seemed obsessed with the idea that what had to be done in class was — regardless of the difficulty

of the texts — the reading of the government texts, failure to do which might result in a reprimand. Though it was pointed out that this Course being tried out for teaching English would result in perhaps better understanding of the texts, the argument cut no ice. Teachers wanted permission to return as fast as possible to the reading of the texts, regardless of whether pupils were capable of making anything at all of them. *In short it means that for a long-term experiment the University must have its own school where freedom to experiment would be unhindered, or the Ministry of Education would have to re-assure teachers about co-operation in research.*

### 5. The Classes and the Schools

5.1 The classes involved were Ninth Grades mainly, though teachers were permitted to try out the lessons in Grades 8 as well as 10. Where the lessons were tried out in Grade 10 systematically, the results have been taken into account for the findings. The streams of Grade 9 that were not involved in the experiment were the control groups.

5.2 The classes were from schools with children of differing background :-

B Category of School	Girls High School Grade 9	32 pupils (Tamil Medium)	English literate home background
	Mowbray Girls School Grade 8	37 pupils (Tamil Medium)	-do-
	Mahamaya Girls School Grade 8B	32 pupils (Sinhala Medium)	-do-
A Category of School	Getambe Senior School Grade 9	32 pupils (Sinhala Medium)	Sinhala Literate home background
	Hindagala Maha Vidyalaya Grade 9	33 pupils (Sinhala Medium)	-do-
	Kandy Hindu Senior School Grade 9	32 pupils (Tamil Medium)	Tamil Literate home background
A + Category of School	Govt. Tamil School, Peradeniya Grade 9	14 pupils (Tamil Medium)	Non Literate background

Sri Rahula, Katugastota, also came into the experiment but because of the ill-health of the teacher could not complete the experiment. Mahamaya was not able to go on with the project because of the already-mentioned stranglehold of the government texts.

5.3 The classes were differentiated mainly on the basis of their home background, but such factors as physical facilities available in the school were also taken into account. Categories B, A & A + were used to describe the better, average and below average classes in relation to the different background and learning opportunities.

6. *Basis of Categorization*<sup>10</sup>

6.1 The categorization was in relation to certain tangible factors which may be important for planning English courses in developing countries :

- (a) the income level
- (b) the occupation of the parents
- (c) the literacy of the parents
- (d) the cultural level

6.2 For '**B**' category of class — the income of the majority of pupils' parents was between Rs. 400/- & 700/- per month. At Mahamaya, the Grade Nine class was made up of 65.6 % of students whose parents had a monthly income of over Rs. 400/-. At Mowbray more than 50 % of the pupils' parents had an income of between Rs. 400/- & 700/-. At Girls High School 59.5 % of the pupils were from homes enjoying an income of over Rs. 400/- per month.

In all these three instances of Grade Nine the literacy rate was high. There certainly was a positive correlation between the income levels of these groups (which ranged from Rs. 400 upwards) on the one hand and mother-tongue as well as English literacy on the other. At Mahamaya, mother-tongue literacy was 100 % — both parents being literate. English literacy was 34.58 %, the criterion being both parents' ability to read and write English. English literacy in terms of a single parent's ability to read and write English was 66 %.

At Girls' High School there was a similar correlation. 84 % of children claimed that at least one parent (generally the father) was conversant with English. 70 % of the pupils claimed English was used occasionally at home.

At Mowbray again it was 100 % mother tongue literacy and a high percentage of English-familiarity among parents.

6.3 Thus the *criteria* of '**B**' category were (a) an over 50 % group in the class enjoying an income of over Rs. 400/- a month. (b) An over 75 % mother tongue literacy at home. (c) An over 50 % literacy in English at least in the case of single parent literacy.

6.4 '**A**' category of pupil represents the class of society which should be the main concern of the State in its English teaching programme. It constitutes by far the largest number of the school population. The higher income group of the '**B**' category will often be able to find ways and means of improving English, and will learn English however inadequate the official programme and its methodology are. These pupils will often get home instruction in English. "**A**" category of pupil learns no English at home, and his home background is one of pure mother-tongue literacy, though it is basic literacy—

most fathers not having had more than a primary education. By parental literacy is meant mainly the father's literacy. In some cases both parents were literate in the mother tongue. The income range was below Rs. 200/- per month. The occupation of parents was cultivation (agriculture), or self-employment as carpenters or masons. Often both parents worked.

Cultural and religious pursuits mean only reading the newspaper if it is available and generally by one parent only (whose reading speed cannot be high) and a temple visit on a full-moon day. In spite of mother tongue literacy, not one home possessed a Buddhist *Jataka Potha* or *Bana Potha*.

At the Hindagala school more than two thirds of the pupils in Grades 9C and 10A were from homes in which the parents earned Rs. 175/- on an average a month. The average family size was seven. Over 60% of the parents were literate in the mother tongue. Only 5% of the families could boast of both parents being literate. Only one parent was literate in English.

At the Hindu Senior School the average income was Rs. 168.13 and over 50% in class were from homes in which both parents together earn less than Rs. 200/-. Over 60% of the parents were literate in the mother tongue, Tamil. Only 2 parents had a knowledge of English.

At Getambe School the family income of more than 50% of the parents was less than Rs. 200/-. More than 60% of both parents read and write Sinhala, the situation here being better than in the earlier two schools, but more than 90% of the literate parents have had only a primary education. Just three parents read and write English.

6.5 The application of our criteria in the case of these three schools shows a marked difference in (a) income & (c) English literacy from the earlier schools in which our 'B' Category pupils were found and less markedly in regard to (b) which is mother tongue literacy. Thus in objective, measureable terms there is a clear difference between A and B category pupil-grades.

6.6 A + category of pupil is equally clearly demarcated. Parents in the Govt. Tamil Senior School, Peradeniya were said to have an average income of Rs. 123/-. But when further enquiries were made, one doubted whether the average income of Rs. 123/- could be correct. One boy claimed that his father was employed in a firm in Kandy and that he lived in a four-roomed house. But on a visit by the teacher to his home, it was discovered that his house was a one-roomed hut, and that his father was unemployed. Most of the parents, on investigation, were found to be casual labourers or estate employees. Thus it seems likely that, the average income of parents was less than the proffered figure of Rs. 123/-.

As for *literacy* level, again results of investigations belied the claims which were that all could read and write. Some parents could not read a newspaper and others could only write their names. None of the parents knew English.

More than 60% of the parents were unskilled labourers or estate coolies. They lived in Hendeniya, Udapolawatte, Pottapitiya, Gannoruwa and Godakandeniya.

6.7 The *facilities* available in the schools also have some relation to the categories of *B*, *A* & *A+*. The category *B* classes were in schools which had facilities — better buildings, library and laboratory facilities, furniture, playground space etc., whereas:

At Hindagala “the principal’s office, three halls, four dilapidated latrines, a few almirahs—two with soiled library books which are hardly given out, a couple of mammoties and a pile of broken furniture speak for the facilities the school enjoys. Perhaps the small plot of land used as a playground completes the picture.”<sup>4</sup> The school has a long and congested hall with 12 noisy classes crammed together without partitions. The teacher describes the school as “just a masonry structure which shelters the teacher and learner for a few hours”.<sup>4</sup>

At Getambe the pupils in the selected grades for the experiment had no class room but some old partition boards gave it a “semblance of a separate class room. Furniture was inadequate and some pupils had to share the furniture. Floor space was restricted, so that the class was tightly packed with desks and chairs. The roof of the school building was in a state of disrepair so that when it rained no work could be done”.<sup>1</sup>

The Hindu Senior School, Kandy, likewise suffers from an acute lack of many essential facilities. The school building consists of only two halls. There are no separate class rooms. The two halls are converted into classrooms which are separated only partly by small screens. Even the toilet facilities are sub-standard.

Facilities in the *A+* school are several degrees worse. The Govt. Tamil School, Peradeniya is a Kanishta Vidyalaya (Junior School). It does not have adequate furniture, teaching aids, space or even proper sanitary facilities. There are no class rooms, no screens even and the entire hall looks like a wattle and daub structure disguised by means of a coat of limewash. It is a half walled structure with gaping holes in the roof.

## 7. The Experiment

The lesson material was of three types:

- (a) English passages with Sinhalese or Tamil equivalent for reconstruction by the pupils. The purpose of the mother-tongue equivalents was for providing cues for the construction orally of the English passages. Pupils did not see the English passages during the lesson until they had themselves reconstructed them orally and then in writing. These English passages were called “*Reconstruction passages*”.
- (b) *Comprehension passages* correlated with (a) in regard to sentence patterns and structural words only.
- (c) *Drills* for practising the patterns and structural words in (a) & (b).

The lesson material was what had earlier been used in pilot projects in 1967 & 1968 before the printing of the Grade Nine Book based on the bilingual technique of reconstruction which was later withdrawn. The material had been arranged as weekly units in the original book, with a theme for a week. The first week was devoted to two passages on a *farmer* and a *smith*. The next week's passage was entitled "*The farmer works hard*" and "*The farmer in harvesting time*". This theme continued and varied in week 3 as "*The farmer, the villager and the harvest*". The repetition was to provide consolidation, and the slight change in content was to sustain interest. In week five the theme moved away from the farmer though it still centred round the rural environment to "*The Sinhalese New Year*" and from here one worked on to *Festivals* in the same week and in week 6 the interest was focussed on the specific festivals of *Vesak & Poson*. Thus the material was organized in relation to themes which were sometimes repeated under varied conditions, but always set realistically in the environment of the pupils. There were no passages on picnics to the sea or games of cricket or on what serendipity means, which are some of the topics of the government textbooks and radio English programmes.

The next observation about the material was that repetition was built into the material through exercises involving construction of English sentences through mother tongue cues. No use was made of substitution tables ; there were however some jumbled-sentence exercises, and filling in of blanks with again mother tongue cues to help.

## 8. *The Mode of Administration*

8.1 The administration of the material was preceded in every case by a test to check on present attainment (*imitation response*). In several instances this attainment test which was kept confidential was re-administered after the end of the series of lessons, together with another achievement test geared specifically to the content of the course being tried out to find out how much had been assimilated. In certain instances an intelligence test, verbal (*Jayasuriya*) and non-verbal (*Raven*), was administered by the teacher on his own initiative to satisfy himself about the I.Q. of his class.

8.2 The mother tongue version of the passage for reconstruction was first administered, and then after several oral attempts had been made at reconstruction, was reconstructed in writing by the pupils. After correction by the teacher of the written exercises, the English passage which is the teacher's model passage was distributed, read orally by the pupils, used for comprehension as far as possible and written out, even as transcription. This took two or three lessons. At the fourth lesson the comprehension passage was done in class and the exercises that followed were answered both orally and in written



English. This again took at least two lessons. After the corrections had been made the drills were taken up and again at least two lessons were devoted to this. Thus as many as seven lessons were necessary for a week's unit, and a week's unit did often run on into the next week, as generally a week's English is only five lessons. However the order of lessons for each set of seven lessons was (a) an initial reconstruction lesson followed by (b) a comprehension and (c) a drill lesson.

8.3 Every reconstruction lesson used the mother tongue for meaning-conveying. The lessons that followed the reconstruction lesson used relatively less mother tongue. It was observed that at the beginning the quantum of mother tongue was heavy but as the lessons proceeded less and less of the mother tongue needed to be used, and the pupils' response to instructions and questions quickened showing that once meaning-conveying had effectively taken place through the bilingual method, it ceased to be a problem requiring special solution.

## 9. Evaluation Tests

9.1 The following tests were administered : an attainment test at the beginning and the same test at the end of a specific period of teaching. This test was not in any way connected with the content vocabulary of the lessons. Another test of greater difficulty was administered.

9.11 **Test I.** The attainment test contained 50 test items, of which only 5 involved *recognition* of the correct answer from a choice of answers. This is an easier skill to acquire than *recall* knowledge which involves recalling the correct answer without the help of an available series of choices. These 5 recognition test items were to test the ability to recognize the meanings of English vocabulary.

38 test items tested the more difficult skill, namely the ability to *recall*. The recall started with the *alphabet*, as the test had a diagnostic character. The other formal areas of language tested were *spelling*, the *sounds*, *vocabulary*, *grammatical mechanisms* such as formation of plurals etc., *word order of sentences*, *prepositions*, *articles* and other *miscellaneous parts of speech*.

3 items were a test of the comprehension skill of what for convenience may be referred to as the *identification of factual or textual matter*, i.e. the skill does not involve writing out of a sentence of one's own after reading a passage, but only reproducing a phrase or word from the actual text, as the answer to the comprehension question does not involve anything more than an identification of the words in the text which contain the answer. Thus the comprehension was of the easiest kind.

The writing of four sentences (called *free composition*) was required. Thus there were 4 free composition items.

This was the test used in all the schools just prior to the teaching experiment except in the case of the Hindu Senior School, Kandy, where the teacher constructed his own test though on the same specifications. For example, this latter test gave marks as follows : 8 marks for recognition items, 61 for recall, 9 for comprehension and 22 for application, whereas the earlier test had the following scheme of marks : 5 marks for recognition, 51 for recall, 7 for comprehension and 16 for composition. Thus the proportions were generally alike.

9.12 **Test II.** A further test of greater difficulty was administered after the course of teaching was over. It contained not a single test item for the easier *recognition* knowledge but there were 25 items for *recall*. There were 5 items for *comprehension* but of these only 2 questions were a test of the **I.M.** variety (*identification of factual matter*). Two questions involved writing out a new sentence in answer to the comprehension question — a more difficult skill. These questions we may designate *understanding of relationships* (**U.R.**). One question was more difficult than an **I.M.** question but not as difficult as a **U.R.** question and was designated an **I.M.\*** (**I.M.** starred).

Finally there were 10 *composition items*. There was a total of 40 items as compared to 50 in the earlier test, but the 40 items were of an infinitely harder variety. 25 items were recall. Whereas in test I there were only 4 compositional items and 3 comprehension items, in test II there were 10 compositional items and 5 comprehension items. Knowledge of grammatical structure was tested only by 18 items in test I, whereas this test sampled the area of grammatical structure with 25 items. In one respect it could be considered easier than test I, namely in that *except for the comprehension questions* it used a vocabulary content which echoed the vocabulary content of the teaching material. The findings of this paper are not based only on improved performances in this test, for as stated, test I was again re-administered to the pupils before test II was used. Both tests are analyzed on page 199 and the table of specifications is available in *Appendix I*.

## 10. *Comparison of test performance*

10.1 In every instance, whether of category *B*, *A* or *A+*, pupils had distinctly improved in their performance after the course of teaching.

10.2 Tabulation of arithmetic mean (**A.M.**) and standard deviation (**S. D.**) results for the different schools are as follows:

Category	School	Test I	Test II
B	Girls' High School	54.28 (S.D. 12)	85.18 (S.D. 14.7)
	Mahamaya	46.2 (S.D. 18.27)	50.7 (S.D. 24.48)
	Mowbray	47.5 (S.D. 1.8.)	54.2 (S.D. 14)
A	Getambe	37.8 (S.D. 13.5)	43.3 (S.D. 17.9)
	Hindagala M.V. (Grade 9)	30.9 (S.D. 7.8)	70.73 (S.D. 15.7)
	Hindagala M.V. (Grade 10)	23.6 (S.D. 8.1)	54.6 (S.D. 14.7)
	K/Hindu Senior	36.0 (S.D. 11.10)	52.8 (S.D. 19.75)
A+	Peradeniya Govt. Tamil School	32 (S.D. 11.1)	41 (S.D. 21.4)

10.3 The difference in improvement ranges between 6% to 30%. One reason could be the difference in personality factors of the teachers. For example regarding the high rate of improvement at Girls' High School where the A.M. for the 1st test was 54.28 and for the final test was 85.18, the teacher concerned received some of the highest grades in the diploma in education examination, and obtained a merit pass. At Hindagala (a school which has been categorized A) the improvement was even better—the mean for Test No. I being 30.9 and for Test No. II, 70.73. This teacher too had scored an excellent grade in his practical teaching examination for the diploma in education. Thus the rate of improvement differs according to personality factors of the teachers. The point however is that improvement took place in every case, regardless of who the teacher was.

10.4 Other reasons could be (a) I.Q. differences among students, and (b) facilities in schools, etc. For example the very good improvement registered at Girls' High School where high income group parents send their children is paralleled by a high rate of improvement at Hindagala where low income group parents send their children. The reason may be that I.Q. is also a contributory factor. Both verbal (*Jayasuriya*) and non-verbal (*Raven*) I.Q. tests revealed at Hindagala an A.M. of 99.66 (for the verbal test) and 99.9 (for the non verbal test). I.Q. seems to have a say from class to class as well, for the I.Q. for Grade 10 of the same school was 83.5 (verbal) and 94.2 (non verbal), which may account for the lower A.M. at Test II in Grade 10 though the rate of improvement was about the same. The same teacher took both classes. The A.M. for Grade 10 at Hindagala was 54.6 as against 70.73 for Grade 9 of the same school.

10.5 What is important is that all students registered an improvement. *This means that the use of the mother tongue for meaning conveying is not dependent for success on high grade teacher qualities.* Any average teacher can produce good results through it though it is inevitable that high grade teacher qualities could make a difference anywhere in the world to the degree of success of any methodology. This is an important condition in favour of a methodology in a country in which competence in English among teachers is fast declining, and in which centralizing of direction is affecting the teacher's freedom and initiative, two requirements that appear to be needed for fostering high grade teacher qualities. A technique using direct method devices of meaning-conveying draws heavily for its success on high grade teaching, and often fares miserably in the hands of average or incompetent teachers. *This is not a draw-back of the reconstruction technique which uses the mother tongue for meaning-conveying.*

## 11. Other Observations

11.1 Some other interesting observations relate to the re-administering of test I after use of the material, before the administration of the second test.

At Hindagala for instance in the second administration of test I, A.M. rose to 46.3 from 30.9, an increase of nearly 16. The teacher wrote :

"The Grade 9C A.M. rose from 30.9 to 46.3. The number of items omitted showed a marked decline and in one group of items it entirely disappeared. The number of correct responses more than doubled".

For example in the first administration, word order questions were all wrong, but in the second administration 50% of the answers were correct. With regard to comprehension and composition in the 1st administration there were 17% of correct answers but in the second administration the percentage rose up to 45.4%. The teacher continued :

"However the dispersion in the re-test was wide, ranging from 22 to 58 with a S.D. of 10.7. This may perhaps be due to the attention paid to individual children who could proceed at a rapid rate or else may be due to the encouragement given the students to do free compositions or both. It is significant to note that the re-test scores of some of the students with relatively high I.Q.s whose scores were low in the first test have risen comparatively higher than those of the others. Gunawardhane of 9C provides an example."<sup>4</sup>

11.2 The experience was similar at the A+ category of school, Govt. Tamil School, Peradeniya. At the second administration of Test I, the A.M. was 41 (S.D. 18). The school has very inadequate facilities, and the pupils' conditions were very difficult. Nevertheless the increase was one of 9. In the case of Test I, 5 out of the 12 students got marks over 35, but in the second adminis-

tration 6 out of 12 scored over 35 ; though this does not indicate much, the highest in the second administration was 73 while in the first administration it was only 50. The teacher reports that of the 12 students in the class, 3 students had irregular attendance which is also responsible for the slower improvement in this A+ category of school.

11.3 At Mowbray the course was done for one full term in Grade 8 on the class teacher's own initiative. There were no interruptions as was the case when the diploma in education students took the classes. The result was an A.M. of 56.2, in Test II a higher mean than for Grade 9 which was taken by the diploma-in-education student. Only 4 students out of the 36 students in class scored less than 35%.

11.4 At Girls' High School the Grade 9 was a Tamil medium class with 22 Arts (generally known to be the weaker streams in schools) and 15 science students. This group did the school's own December term test which was given to all the other parallel Grade 9 classes. The best of these other Grade Nines was the Sinhala medium 9A (Science) class (the control group). At the common term test in December the Grade 9 Tamil medium, after its roughly six month *Reconstruction Course*, scored an A.M. of 52.1, while the Sinhala medium class scored an A.M. of 50.3. This in itself is not a significant difference. 7 scored below 35 in the Sinhala medium Grade 9A, and 13 above 50, but in our experimental class though there were 9 below 35, there were 20 above 50.

## 12. Conclusions

The consistently better performance after use of the reconstruction teaching material shows that the technique of meaning-conveying through the mother tongue ensured better learning of English. It also incidentally indicated that other factors in the course, such as the gradations, psychological factors of motivation and interest, as well as repetition techniques, all of which were built into the Course that was tried out may have helped. But the chief factor was no doubt meaning-conveying in the mother tongue, both Sinhala and Tamil. Every teacher commented on the improvement, and it may do to conclude with two quotations :

- (a) "The result of the second test shows an improvement in application, word-order, and the mechanical skills such as spacing, full-stops, capitals etc.

In the first test Mahindaratna's performance in word order exercises was very poor. Only one out of five attempts was successful. In the second test he was successful in three out of five attempts. Of the total number of 31 pupils 18 knew the word order of 4 out of 5 sentences. In the application exercises 14 out of 31 were able to write more than 5 sentences perfectly. They made no mistakes in tense, word order, spelling, spacing of words, capitals, etc. Some examples of sentences written are :

1. The farmer winnows the paddy with a fan and separates the grain from the chaff.
2. They take the sheaves of paddy to the threshing floor.
3. They tap the bark of the rubber trees."<sup>1</sup>

(b) "The explanation for the improved performance is mainly the better acquisition and retention of sentence meaning which was made possible by the Reconstruction Technique. Dodson says 'No matter whether a foreign language is learnt in the class room, at home or in the foreign country, the learner must first of all acquire the meaning of the sentence he hears before he can respond in speech or action'..... Pictures were not used and the mother tongue as a meaning-conveyor worked very well with the students..... This explains the reason why the students performed so well in Test 2"<sup>9</sup>

### 13. Drawbacks.

The drawbacks of this investigation were :

- (a) The inability to carry on the teaching project for more than 6 to 8 weeks under one teacher, as the diploma-in-education teachers had to hand over to the class teachers who were themselves hesitant about going on with the experiment with "full steam" because of syllabus sent out by the Ministry of Education. Thus the experiment was not conducted under the most favourable conditions for the new technique.
- (b) The fear of co-operation on the part of the schools, not because of unwillingness but because of the stranglehold of the text books — mainly a misconception no doubt, for in Colombo a Circuit Education Officer in English is openly advocating rejection or ignoring of the text books.
- (c) The absence of a secondary school run by the University which could be a laboratory for curricular experiments in the teaching of the arts, languages, and the sciences.

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## Appendix I

## ANALYSIS OF THE ENGLISH ATTAINMENT TESTS

## TEST I

SKILLS EXAMINED		RECOGNITION		RECALL		COMPOSITION		COMPREHENSION	
		Items	Marks	Items	Marks	Items	Marks	Items	Marks
Grammatical Structure	1. Alphabet	—	—	5	5	—	—	—	—
	2. Spelling	—	—	5	5	—	—	—	—
	3. Sounds	—	—	5	5	—	—	—	—
	4. Vocabulary	5	5	—	—	—	—	—	—
	5. Vocab. & Spelling	—	—	5	10	—	—	—	—
	6. Plural of nouns	—	—	5	5	—	—	—	—
	7. Word Order	—	—	3	3	—	—	—	—
	8. Either Word Order/ Vocab./ Tense Formation/Spelling	—	—	4	12	—	—	—	—
	9. Either Articles/Prep./ Tense Formation	—	—	6	8	—	—	—	—
	10. Composition	—	—	—	—	4	16	—	—
	11. Comprehension	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	6
Total No. items (50)		5		38		4		3	
Total Marks (80)			5		53		16		6

## TEST II

SKILLS EXAMINED		RECOGNITION		RECALL		COMPOSITION		COMPREHENSION	
		Items	Marks	Items	Marks	Items	Marks	Items	Marks
Grammatical Structure	Plural	—	—	2	2	—	—	—	—
	Word Order	—	—	6	6	—	—	—	—
	Tense Formation	—	—	5	5	—	—	—	—
	Prepositions	—	—	3	3	—	—	—	—
	Articles	—	—	4	4	—	—	—	—
	Pronouns	—	—	3	3	—	—	—	—
	Negative	—	—	2	2	—	—	—	—
Composition		—	—	—	—	10	40	—	—
Comprehension									
Q. 1 I.M.		—	—	—	—	—	—	1	3
Q. 2 U.R.		—	—	—	—	—	—	1	6
Q. 3 I.M.		—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2
Q. 4 I.M.*		—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2
Q. 5 U.R.		—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2
Total No. items (40)		—		25		10		5	
Total Marks (80)			—		25		40		15

## Appendix II

“The Arithmetic Means of the second test and first test which are 50.7 and 46.2 respectively when compared show an overall improvement of 4.5. This is a meagre improvement but the two tests are of two different types as stated earlier. [Appendix I]

Whilst the earlier test was a more easy one with questions of the recognition type as well as the recall type the second had questions only of the recall type as the analysis of the tests have made clear. A better comparison would be that of the averages scored for the recall type of questions in the first paper with that of the marks scored in the second test. The average scored for the recall type of questions in this test is only 19.6% whilst in the second test it is 50.7%. Thus a marked improvement of about 31.1 is clearly seen.”

(From : The report of Miss M.C. Perera, Mahamaya College).

## Appendix III

“The amount of time devoted to the teaching A period of 4 weeks beginning from 3rd July to 3rd August— 30 periods of 40 mins. each were devoted to this.

Tabulated below are the results of a test held at the end of this period.

Part A : Grammatical structure.

<i>Area or skill tested</i>	<i>Percentage of correct answers</i>
Recall of tense forms	87
Negative forms	78.8
Number	87.8
Word order	95.7
Prepositions	96
Articles	78.8
Pronouns	100

In *Parts B and C* (comprehension and composition) the results are presented in a form which enables comparison with the 1st attainment test given at the beginning of the course.

	<i>1st test</i>	<i>2nd test</i>
Comprehension I.M. only	76.2%	92.0%
Comprehension taken as a whole	76.2%	88.4%
Composition	31.4%	83.3%

The highest number of mistakes in the objective question were in the use of prepositions. There is a very strong probability that students were misled by the ‘format’ of the questions 19—22, not realising that the three sentences were to be taken as a paragraph and not as individual sentences.

It is also possible that a few students were unaware that ‘are’ is a form of the verb ‘to be’ — though they may have been familiar with the verbs ‘are’ and ‘is’ as they are.

100% performance by all the students was the aim of this course and it could be achieved with more practice and drilling.

*Part B Comprehension* — The performance compares favourably with the performance in the earlier attainment test which for comprehension had simple I.M. questions only.



The second test had 3 more difficult I.M. questions which fall into category U.R. The vocabulary in the passage given did not reflect the vocabulary used in the course.

*Part C Composition* — There was a choice given, but it was rather unbalanced because students had the option of choosing between application in the form of Recall or free Response, and many opted for the recall. The performance in the 2nd test shows a great deal of improvement.

There has been improvement in all spheres, the most remarkable being in the skill of free composition. The scores on this test have :

A.M. — 85.18	The difference in Mean between the attainment test and the achievement test — 30.9
S.D. — 14.7	

*The greatest frequency on this test is between 94-100, and only 3 scores fall below the former mean of 54.28. The greatest frequency on the 1st test was in the class interval 48-40 and only 4 students had scores over 70."*

(From : The report of Mrs. D. A. Rajasena, Girls' High School, Kandy).